

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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R 190529Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7907
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEHRAN 3700

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, IR
SUBJ: POPULAR MOBILIZATION, IRANIAN STYLE

REF: A. TEHRAN 3532, B. TEHRAN 3201

SUMMARY: CALLS FOR CITIZENS TO MOBILIZE AGAINST PRESENT LOW-
LEVEL VIOLENCE IN IRAN (REFTEL) HAVE SO FAR RESULTED IN
LIMITED POLITICAL ACTION UNDER RESURGENCE PARTY AEGIS,
INCLUDING PRO-GOVERNMENT SPEECHES AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN MANY
CITIES, AND EMERGENCE OF A RESISTANCE CORPS OR MOVEMENT WHICH
MADE ITS APPEARANCE WHEN IT ACTIVIISTS INFILTRATED ANTI-
GOVERNMENT MOBS IN THREE PROVINCIAL CITIES, IDENTIFIED RING
LEADERS AND HELD THEM UNTIL POLICE COULD ARRIVE TO MAKE
FORMAL ARRESTS. DESPITE SPECULATION, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE AS
YET THAT GOVERNMENT IS DEFINITELY FALLING BACK ON CREATION
OF SUCH VIGILANTE "POPULAR MILITIA". RATHER, WE BELIEVE, THIS
REPRESENTS ONE OF SEVERAL INSTRUMENTS GOI IS TESTING, BOTH
TO WARN OFF POTENTIAL DISSIDENTS AND TO SEE WHAT METHODS
WORK BEST AS DISSIDENT TACTICS EVOLVE. END SUMMARY.
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1. RECENT INDICATIONS THAT THE RESURGENCE PARTY WILL
ORGANIZE PRO-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND THE RESISTANCE
CORPS WILL HELP LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS IDENTIFY
VIOLENT DEMONSTRATORS AND CONFRONT THEM SUGGEST THE GOI
WISHES TO BRING MORE PRO-GOI CITIZENS INTO PLAY AGAINST
THE WAVE OF HIT-AND-RUN VIOLENCE THAT HAS STRUCK OVER

53 CITIES AND TOWNS (OUR LATEST COUNT) BEFORE EASING OFF IN PAST WEEK.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, RESISTANCE CORPS ACTIVISTS INFILTRATED DEMONSTRATORS APRIL 13-15 AND IDENTIFIED AND HANDED OVER TO POLICE 12 SUSPECTED RIOTERS. THESE ACTIONS TOOK PLACE IN ISFAHAN, QOM, AND ZANJAN. PRESS ACCOUNTS BEING PUBLISHED NEARLY INCLUDE NAMES OF DEMONSTRATORS TURNED OVER TO LOCAL POLICE. OFFICIAL SOURCE IN JUSTICE MINISTRY HAS INFORMED US THAT RESISTANCE CORPSMEN HAVE NO POWERS OF ARREST. BUT CAN "HOLD DOWN" RIOTER UNTIL POLICE CAN BE SUMMONED TO TAKE INDIVIDUAL INTO CUSTODY.

3. GOI HAS REMAINED AMBIVALENTLY SILENT ON QUESTION OF OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED CITIZEN VIOLENCE, AND MEDIA PLAY HAS SUGGESTED THAT GOVERNMENT IS NOT REALLY OPPOSED TO "CITIZEN ACTION" AGAINST DEMONSTRATORS AT LEAST IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. SOURCES CLOSE TO POLICE SAY THIS LINE HAS REASSURED POLICE A BIT THAT THEY WILL NOT BE OUT ON FIRING LINE ALONE. SCOPE OF RANDOM VIOLENCE OF PAST FEW WEEKS HAS SURPRISED GOI AND OPPOSITIONIST LEADERS ALIKE, AND BOTH SIDES ARE CLEARLY CONTEMPLATING WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

4. IN THIS CONTEXT, EMERGENCE OF RESISTANCE CORPS IS INTERESTING. CORPS WAS ESTABLISHED IN
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JUNE, 1977 AS CIVIL FORCE WHICH WOULD RESIST GUERRILLA-STYLE IF IRAN IS OCCUPIED IN TIME OF WAR. CORPS, WHICH IS OFTEN CONFUSED WITH CIVIL DEFENSE ORGANIZATION FROM WHICH IT GREW AND WAS SEPARATED IN 1977, WAS BASED ON IDEA SHAH FIRST ESPOUSED IN 1972-3. COMMANDER OF CORPS IS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF IRAN'S GENDARMERIE, GENERAL MOHAMMAD MOMENI. LEADERSHIP COMES FROM GENDARMERIE, WHICH HAS EXECUTIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ORGANIZATION. MEMBERS OF CORPS INCLUDE MANY CIVIL SERVANTS, RESURGENCE PARTY MEMBERS WHO HAVE BEEN INTERESTED AND PRIVATE CITIZENS (PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS). FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH LOCAL MEMBERS OF CORPS, IT IS CLEAR THAT UNITS ARE WELL CONTROLLED BY GENDARMERIE AND COULD NOT HAVE EMBARKED ON PUBLIC ORDER ACTIVITIES WITHOUT OFFICIAL APPROVAL.

5. IT WOULD APPEAR THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NOMINAL MEMBERS WHO JOINED BECAUSE SOMEONE IN AUTHORITY SUGGESTED THEY SHOULD AND ACTIVISTS. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE NUMBER OF ACTIVIST MEMBERS OF RESISTANCE CORP,

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BUT IT WOULD APPEAR AS OF NOW TO BE VERY TINY PERCENTAGE
OF 500,000 PROJECTED MEMBERSHIP FIGURE GIVEN US BY ONE
SOURCE. ORGANIZATION HAS BEEN LARGELY MORIBUND, AND EVEN
FEW MEMBERS WE HAVE TALKED TO WHO CAN PRODUCE MEMBERSHIP
CARDS KNOW NOTHING OF PRESENT ACTIVITIES. SOME OF OUR
MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE IRANIAN SOURCES HAVE SPECULATED THAT
THIS MAY BE GOI'S WAY OF BRINGING SAVAK AND OTHER OFFICIAL
GOI LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS INTO DEMONSTRATION CONTROL
PROCESS BY BACK DOOR. WE HAVE NO HARD EVIDENCE EITHER
WAY, BUT FACT THAT RESISTANCE CORP WAS BESIEGED BY
"OFFERS" TO HELP PROTECT THE FATHERLAND AND JUST DAYS
LATER PRODUCED FIRST SUCCESSFUL FORAYS IN THREE DIFFERENT
CITIES SUGGESTS SOMEONE WAS STEPPING A GOOD DEAL MORE
SPRIGHTLY THAN USUAL, PRESUMABLY WITH ORGANIZED GOI
ASSISTANCE.

6. RESURGENCE PARTY ACTIVITY CONTINUES, BUT IT APPEARS
TO HAVE TURNED AWAY FROM FORCEFUL PHYSICAL ACTION AGAINST
DEMONSTRATORS THAT PROGRESSIVE WING LEADER MAJIDI FLIRTED
WITH BRIEFLY (REFTELS). NEITHER GOI NOR PARTY LEADERS
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HAVE SPECIFICALLY EXCLUDED FORCEFUL RESPONSE FROM THE
PARTY MANDATE, HOWEVER, LATEST ENTRY INTO THE CONTEST TO

SAFEGUARD THE NATION IS THE CONSERVATIVE WING, UNDER HUSHANG ANSARY, WHICH ON APRIL 17 SAID IT WAS DISPATCHING 250 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE WING TO VARIOUS CITIES AND TOWNS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY TO BOOST PARTY ORGANIZATION AND ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO WORK ACTIVELY IN THE PARTY TO HELP PROTECT THE NATION. PERSIAN MEDIA ON APRIL 18 REPORTED PARTY RALLIES APRIL 13-15 IN SEVERAL IRANIAN CITIES, INCLUDING DAMAVAND, KARAJ, SHAHI, MAHALOT, SHAHRUD AND SHAHRIAT OVER PAST WEEKEND. THESE WERE LED BY RESURGENCE PARTY ACTION COMMITTEES, SIMILAR TO THOSE SET UP EARLIER IN REZAIYEH, KERMANS SHAH, PIRANSHAR, AND OTHER CITIES. DEMONSTRATIONS WERE PEACEFUL AND PARTY LEADERS SPOKE ON NEED TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE FROM POLITICS.

7. (COMMENT: GOI AND PARTY ACTIVITY TO DATE CAN BE BOILED DOWN TO CONTINUING EFFORTS BY THE SHAH AND HIS ADVISERS TO TEST A VARIETY OF METHODS FOR CONTROLLING AND DISSUADING INTERNAL DISSIDENTS. THESE HAVE INCLUDED PRO-GOI SPEECHES AND DEMONSTRATIONS AS WELL AS ENCOURAGEMENT TO "RESISTANCE CORPS" PARA-MILITARY WHO MIGHT MOBILIZE MUSCLE AND ACT MORE DIRECTLY IN THE STREETS AGAINST THE DISSIDENTS. WE GUESS SUCH TESTING WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE SHAH FEELS HE HAS A PRETTY GOOD IDEA OF (A) ENTIRE RANGE OF TACTICS TO WHICH OPPOSITION WILL RESORT, (B) RELATIVE SUCCESS AND POLITICAL COST OF EACH OF THE MEANS USED TO COMBAT THEM, AND (C) FOREIGN PRESS REACTION.
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